

A S E C O N D
L E T T E R
T O H E R G R A C E T H E
D U C H E S S
O F
D E V O N S H I R E

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THE RECORD

DEPARTMENT

OF THE

A S E C O N D
L E T T E R

TO HER GRACE THE
D U C H E S S
O F
D E V O N S H I R E.

SHE SIGHS, AND IS NO DUTCHESS AT HER HEART !

Poets.

L O N D O N :

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MDCCLXXVII.

A SECOND
LETTER

TO HER GRACE THE

DUCHESS

OF

DEVONSHIRE

THE FIRST AND IS NO DUTCHMAN AT HIS DEATH

By William Combe

LONDON

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MDCCLXXVII

A S E C O N D
L E T T E R, &c.

MADAM,

THE apprehensions which Your Grace, and some of your confidential Friends expressed, previous to the publication of my First Letter, induced me to suppress many parts of it. I had formed a vain hope that a serious Address might awaken your slumbering reason, turn its

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scrutinies to your past conduct, and force upon you a consciousness of the many subjects which might be observed ~~there, for rigid investigation and severe chastisement.~~ But the public appearance of that Epistle converted your apprehensions, and those of your trusty associates, into a boasting affectation; and though it had been the source of much anxiety, you treated it with a childish levity and contempt, which has brought me to my paper again. I shall therefore proceed, with much good will, to offer the suppressions of my former Letter to the Public, and to Your Grace.

You have been, for some time, the object of pity among all persons of reason and understanding; and I must beg leave to inform Your Grace, that contempt is not far behind, and may soon overtake you. As I have entered upon the business of holding forth a picture of your conduct to the world and to yourself, it becomes me to write without reserve, or I should not mortify you so much as to inform you, that even *Hair-dressers, Milliners, Mantua-makers*, and the whole Gentry of similar denominations, lift up their eyes at the mention of your name, and declare you to be a phenomenon of Folly. Yes, ungrateful creatures! they make Your Grace, to whom they are so much indebted, the chief topic of their *professional*
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entertainment; and render the toilettes of their employers agreeable and interesting, by the variety of anecdotes with which your conduct furnishes their daily intelligence. Here, indeed, I expected that Impertinence would have confined its exertions; and that it would never have been tempted to stray beyond the limits of private conversation. I rested, in some degree, upon the timidity natural to your sex for your preservation from public insult. But the crowd at *Ranelagh*, I find, has caught the infection; and, not many evenings ago, the Impertinents followed you with looks and expressions which would have terrified the generality of your sex in the extreme, and which every reflecting person considered as a most disgraceful and alarming mark of public disapprobation.

Your Grace may pretend that the public displeasure is a matter which gives you little concern: but declarations of this kind will not be believed; and the whole of your past conduct will give a positive denial to such an assertion. The pains you have taken to attract public notice evidently proves, that public admiration is the object of your heart; and when this is not only withdrawn, but changed into contempt and insult, Your Grace will in vain declare your indifference about

about it : no one will believe you, and they who know you best, whatever acquiescence they may pretend, will be the least disposed to give you credit on the occasion. Besides, Madam, to laugh at public opinion, is to make a jest of what the wisest and best men have, at all times, endeavoured to deserve by every rational and virtuous means : and to aim at being thought capable of despising it, discovers a disposition to become of that incorrigible nature to which, if your manners are not corrected, a few years will certainly conduct you.

No one in this country, especially of your sex, when political sentiments are not supposed to operate, ever becomes the object of public detestation, unless the good sense of mankind has been evidently insulted by some gross violation of decency in manners or propriety of appearance. And I will venture to assert, from my own observations on the genius and temper of my countrymen, that the insult must be very gross on the part of any person of your sex and condition before they will return it. But so strong a conviction do I bear in my breast of your love of public admiration, that I doubt not but you will either accommodate yourself in some measure to the humour of the crowd, or retreat from their observation ;

tion; which, as you do not at present seem much attached to *Devonshire-House*, will, I fear, be a matter of difficulty and reluctance.

It is not in the power of Nobility, nor even Royalty, in this country, and my heart glows as I write the sentence, to frown the People into silence. High rank does not sanctify folly; and as law regards not the offender, but the offence, so in those matters of personal conduct to which the law does not attend, popular opinion possesses a judicial power, and will condemn the error, though it crown a character as dignified as Your Grace.

BUT I do not presume, Madam, to give you information on subjects of this nature; I wish rather to awaken your recollection to what you already know. Your own experience has abundant proofs to support my assertions, whenever you shall chuse to receive them; and your own heart is ready to confirm them all, whenever you will give it an hearing. I say this with some degree of authority; for your confidential Friends, whom I shall not pass over in silence, do not attempt your justification; they only offer to excuse, and their excuses condemn you. They endeavour to divert attention from the

serious consequences of your present conduct, by holding forth a Picture of your Youth and Folly, which they accompany with the most humbling hopes of your amendment. Even the News-paper that has often and voluntarily declared your indiscretions, has been *bribed* into an unwilling praise. A *purchased* corner has presented the Public and Your Grace with its adulatory verse, which may also have been purchased; as I do not believe the person who is employed by you or your Friends upon the occasion, to be capable of producing a performance equal even to this trifling composition *.

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* The following lines are those to which I have alluded, and whose insertion in the News-papers, I will venture to declare, was *purchased*.

WIT is a FEATHER : this we all admit :
 But sure each Feather in your cap is wit :
 'Tis the best flight of Genius—to improve
 The smiles of beauty, and the bliss of love.
 Like beams around the Sun, your Feathers shine,
 And raise the splendor of your charms divine;
 Such plumes the worth of mighty conqu'rors shew,
 For who can conquer hearts so well as you?

When,

It will be very apposite to my design to insert at large the singular Address which your Poet prefixes to his *downy* compliment. You will, I believe, recollect it to be as follows:

*"To her Grace the DUCHESS of DEVONSHIRE, in answer to
"all the absurd and illiberal aspersions cast on the fashionable
"Feathers by churlish old Women, ridiculous Prudes, and brutish
"Censors."*

What absurdity or illiberality can be, with justice, attributed to those who lift up their voice against what is universally acknowledg'd to be absurd and foolish in the extreme. Your Grace may have been informed, but I am at a loss to discover. Besides, your Bard, in flattering you, has treated your best Friends with a most unjustifiable severity; for if all

When on your head I see those fluttering things,
I think that Love is there, and claps his wings.
Feathers help'd Jove to fan his am'rous flame:
CUPID has Feathers, Angels wear the same.
Since, then, from Heav'n their origin we trace,
Preserve the Fashion—it becomes Your Grace.

who

who censure your appearance deserve the titles of *churlish old Women, ridiculous Prudes* and *brutish Censors*, the first and second of these characters will chiefly rest upon Mrs. P—r and Lady Sp——r; while the spirited Author of that well-written *Satire, The First of April*, and myself, must sensibly feel the application of the latter.

SUCH venal flattery, however, will afford Your Grace but small consolation; and you will, I should hope, find it difficult, amid the lullings of such praises, to forget the late severities of a more powerful and less perfidious Muse. If not, I should pity you indeed. My pen should then cease from its unavailing labour, and stop short in the career of admonition.

I AM disposed to think, nay, I have very substantial reasons for thinking, that Your Grace places an unreserved confidence in persons whom the DUKE of DEVONSHIRE does not approve, and from whom LADY SPENSER has in vain endeavoured to separate you; and that matters which you do not think proper, and, perhaps, may be really improper, to communicate to your Husband or your Mother, you freely entrust to their confidence. You may, with all this in-
attention,

attention, be entirely innocent ; but no one will be so partial to your judgment, or that of your friends, as to suppose that, when you act without the knowledge of your nearest and best connections, and under the influence of your worst, you will do good to others, or acquire honour to yourself. To this your sneering Advocates may answer, " Prove your assertion ; give one instance of her doing any thing without consulting *those* whom *you* think it her *duty* to consult upon all occasions."

YOUR Grace may be assured, that I shall not hazard the little credit I have already gained with the Public by asserting what I cannot prove. I have an example at hand ; and, if there were a possibility of your denying the fact, I could produce sufficient and unanswerable evidence to authenticate the veracity of it.

" A LITERARY Person of your own Sex, with every previous mark of respect on her part, and condescending permission on yours, dedicates a moral work, consisting of two volumes, to Your Grace.—In return, you desired her to send you a number of copies, bound in the same splendid manner as those which she had already presented to you. When she had thus obeyed Your Grace's commands,

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" the Female Author and her works were so far forgotten,
 " that you did not even take the necessary notice of paying
 " her for completing your commission. After waiting a con-
 " siderable length of time, at proper intervals, and in a very
 " respectful manner, she addressed several Letters to Your
 " Grace, to which no answers were given. At length, irri-
 " tated by your neglect, and apprehensive that the debt you
 " had incurred might be totally forgotten, she caused it
 " to be intimated to some friends of Your Grace, that, if
 " you did not pay her for the books, your conduct, with
 " all its circumstances, should appear in a public paper.
 " Alarm'd at this, or, at least, influenced by LADY SPENCER,
 " who knew how ill you had behaved in this business,
 " you deigned to send the Author the mighty boon of
 " TWENTY POUNDS; and, either from *ignorance* or *inso-*
 " *lence*, I can hardly suppose it *emptiness of purse*, that sum
 " was, as it is to be concluded by your order, composed
 " of almost every species of coin current in this kingdom."

Now, Madam, from the internal evidence of the fact, I
 will venture, without other assistance, to declare that the
 DUKE was ignorant of this transaction. His regard for
 your propriety, and humanity for the person you proposed to
 insult, would have determined him to prevent it. Nay, I
 believe

believe him to have been unacquainted with it, till it was too late for his generosity to interpose, and make some amends for your pitiful resentment.

I WILL not, indeed I do not suppose this conduct to be the result of your own judgment. I should think it had its advisers. Your confidential Friends, perhaps, might suggest it to you, though I think it even beneath their ideas of revenge. It seems to be about equal to the spirit of a *Femme de Chambre*; and if Your Grace, like many of your rank, should have a Prime Minister of that kind, I should at once determine it to be some cunning contrivance of the Toilette.

THERE is another cause assigned for your extreme love of dissipation; a cause which, as I know it to be false, I should not mention, if I had not resolved to lay before Your Grace every important circumstance that relates to you. I allude, Madam, to the insipidity which some of your particular Friends chuse to throw around the DUKE of DEVONSHIRE's character. Be that as it may, I would beg Your Grace to reflect for a moment, what must be the folly of that woman, whose avowed advocates fly to the easy, uninteresting temper of her Husband for a justification

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of them. But, Madam, I will venture to give a firm denial to the assertion. The DUKE of DEVONSHIRE is a character of high respect. He possesses an understanding which has hitherto preserved him in the path of honour and dignity ; nor do I know a single instance of his deviating from what became him as a man, or his station required of him. That serious, tranquil, composed cast of character which he possesses, as it has preserved him from the snares and talons of gamesters and sharpers, will be considered by the harpies of that denomination as insipidity and want of spirit. The man of dissipation and extravagance, beholding in the DUKE of DEVONSHIRE's conduct a good sense which throws disgrace upon his own, will pronounce it dullness and pusillanimity : but the Many who have shared his kindness, and been the objects of his friendship, will declare him to be possessed of a sensibility which is capable of the most generous actions, and has often performed them.

HE does not, and I congratulate him upon it, possess those flashy talents which, however calculated they may be to amuse, are seldom of any use to Society ; and too often end in the ruin of those who possess them. But he is endowed with an understanding which has been cultivated with
wisdom,

wisdom, and possesses that solidity which forms a happy medium between immediate acquiescence and obstinate resistance; an understanding that is subject to regulation, but not to caprice; and knows how to deliberate before it enters upon judgment. Besides, Madam, the DUKE of DEVONSHIRE is an honest man; and if he possessed those splendid follies which by many are mistaken for abilities, your friends would no longer shake their heads, and shrug sententiously at the mention of his wisdom. But if ever the DUKE should deviate from prudence into dissipation; if he should exchange the sober discretion which has hitherto distinguished him from the generality of his rank, for extravagant and riotous living; if, to use the language of your Friends, he should give up his present dullness and insipidity for the wisdom of the COTERIE, or the vivacity of the GAMING TABLE; I shall consider Your Grace as the cause of such a transformation; and while the rapacious vultures that hover round the rich sacrifice to your name, the reflecting part of mankind will detest you.

BUT the phlegm attributed to your noble Husband seems for once to be suspended; and the approaching festivity, which, I am informed, is of his own suggestion, will gain

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him,

him, at least, a temporary credit for Taste and Abilities. In general matters, I should be sorry to think in common with your confidential associates; but for once I will speak their language, and, though from different motives, will applaud the DUKE of DEVONSHIRE for a design which, if I guess aright, does him honour in the cause, and I hope will produce him satisfaction in the effect.

HIS proposal for, or consent to, the grand *Spectacle* which is preparing at *Devonshire-House*, is not the result of thoughtless extravagance. Depend upon it, Madam, some more secret and better motive gives life to the costly exhibition, at the thoughts whereof your heart pants with an anxious pleasure. I believe your DUKE wishes to make you fond of home; and by converting *Devonshire-House*, which has hitherto been the scene of tranquil dignity and unparading hospitality, into an occasional Temple of Pleasure, he thinks it may be sanctified to your future approbation; and that the festive Consecration which is preparing, will promote in you an attachment to your home, and render it the chief scene of your future pleasures: or, by one great *manœuvre* to root out of your breast the infant love of Gaming, which has lately appeared, to the terror and alarm of your best friends.

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IN these Addresses to Your Grace, I propose your real good. I am not actuated by personal envy, or personal resentment. You have done me no injury; and I would not exchange situations with Your Grace, though you could throw twice your present fortune and splendour into the scale :

I envy none their pageantry and show,
I envy none the gilding of their woe.

It is impossible that you can be happy! Folly and dissipation are the foes of happiness. They may lull, or rather baffle sorrow for a while, but it will come at last with collected fury, and never quit your heart 'till it is rescued by repentance, or sheltered in the grave. Beyond that awful scene, I shall not at present call your attention. May some event, big with alarm and danger, force your mind to contemplate its highest and best interests! Indeed, my pen, feeble as it is, will not rest from making occasional remonstrances with you; and it will depend upon your future conduct, whether my next Letter shall speak the language of Censure or of Praise.

F I N I S.

In their Address to John C. Calhoun, I propose your real good.
I am not affected by personal envy, or personal resentment.
You have done me no injury, and I would not exchange
positions with you. Calhoun, through you could do this
your position, and I should be into the hole.

I am very much interested and proud
of every one who is doing as much work.

It is a mistake that you can be happy. I will and I will
and the loss of happiness. They may fall, or they
will follow for a while, but it will come and it will
last long, and never get your heart. It is better to
remain, I shall not be content with your work. I shall
every day, with your and longer, longer, longer, longer
and the highest and best interests. I shall not be
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